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NNEPA Director and Navajo Attorney General Offer Public Comment To New Mexico EPA

FARMINGTON, N.M.- Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency Executive Director Stephen Etsitty and Navajo Nation Attorney General Harrison Tsosie provided public comment at the New Mexico Environment Department Regarding Regional Haze Dispute.

The July 24 public meeting at San Juan College provided an update from the New Mexico Environment Department and the Environmental Protection Agency on the status of the Federal Implementation Plan for Interstate Transport of Pollution Affecting Visibility and Best Available Retrofit Technology (BART) for the San Juan Generating Station.

The meeting gave a general overview how the New Mexico Environment Department plans to work with stakeholders to identify viable alternatives to the regional haze plans previously adopted by the EPA and State of New Mexico, if any.

In the public comment period, Navajo Nation EPA Executive Director Stephen Etsitty provided the following comment:

“On behalf of President Ben Shelly, I would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to Governor Martinez and the New Mexico Environment Department for including the Navajo Nation as a key stakeholder in this public meeting process to seek an alternative to the BART Federal Implementation Plan for the San Juan Generating Station.

We are ready to participate openly and willingly at every meeting to share our perspectives on the future of SJGS. I hope each subsequent meeting will have as much attendance and robust discussion as this first meeting. We look forward to developing an alternative State Implementation Plan that reflects a balance of all the different interests.

NNEPA was initially created as an Environment Protection Commission in 1973, just three years after the USEPA was established. We have worked on Air Quality issues for decades. In 2005, the Navajo Nation helped finalize the BART determination for sulfur

dioxide at the Four Corners Power Plant. When USEPA and the environmental organizations were ready to settle on an 85 percent emissions reduction; the Navajo Nation was able to leverage a commitment from FCPP to achieve 90-92 percent emissions reductions. This is what we have in effect today at FCPP, significant annual emissions reductions and enforceable emission limits.

We can assist in achieving a better outcome when we participate in these kinds of processes; and we look forward to working with our own communities and people; and with our neighbors off of the Navajo Nation.”

Navajo Nation Attorney General Harrison Tsosie provided the following public comment:

“...the predicament we are now in, by federal policy and environmental policy, the very economy created for the Navajo people, for the Navajo Nation is being threatened by environmental policies of this country. And it creates a parallel for us, on the one hand, we have become dependent on the coal economy where it provides jobs, provides revenue, royalties, taxes and has sustained the Navajo people for the last 50 years, now this very economy is under threat again by the Federal government and policies. So that being the case, I just wanted to explain how the Navajo Nation thinks in terms of environmental regulations and the development of the economy. Currently, we do agree that we should have a cleaner world but at the same time that needs to be balanced against the very health, again the well being of our people also by providing jobs and access to clean, reliable energy. Thank you.”

A series of public meetings focused on consumer/rate payer, public health and environment and the Navajo Nation will be announced soon and provided on the New Mexico Environment Department website.

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